



Media Release

SENATE COMMITTEE HEARS COMMUNITY STRUGGLE FOR ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

The Anmatjere community in Northern Territory lives in a childcare desert with no childcare places available. Located approximately 200km north of Alice Springs, Ti Tree can be classified as a childcare desert, marking 0.0 places per child in the [Mitchell Institute's Childcare Deserts report](#).

A Senate Committee today heard from remote community members about the impact a lack of early childhood education and care services has on their lives and their children.

People in the Anmatjere region in the Northern Territory have been calling for more than 12 years for access to early childhood education and care in the town of Ti Tree, about 200kms north of Alice Springs.

Our recent [Voices from Community video](#) compiles the concerns of community members who have been running a community-led campaign for local early childhood services. The video forms part of the SNAICC submission and evidence to the Senate Select Committee on Work and Care.

SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle said the impact of an absence of early childhood and care services in a community was profound.

“It’s a barrier to employment, puts pressure on family members, and affects children’s development and readiness for school,’ Ms Liddle said.

“The community members in this video represent only a fraction of families and education professionals who live in Ti Tree. Some parents have had to travel an almost 400km round trip just to ensure their children receive early years education.”

“The latest Closing the Gap data from the Productivity Commission showed a concerning decline in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as being developmentally on track and ready for school.

“Leaving an entire community with such a deficit in educational services puts the healthy development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk and perpetuates unjust cycles of disadvantage.

“Parents, mostly women, also face barriers to secure employment and educational opportunities as a flow-on effect if they cannot find alternative care for their children.

“The people of Ti Tree have been calling for this essential service for over 12 years. That’s 12 years too long.

“Immediate plans must be put in place to make early learning and childcare accessible for families in Ti Tree.

“This urgency must also extend to other Indigenous communities in regional and rural areas if we are to truly close the gap in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.”

Ti Tree community member Estelle Carter says, “Ultimately, we rely on family. The grandmothers are the ones looking after the babies while the mothers are trying to empower themselves and provide for their families.

“We want our children not to have that gap in their education. We want them to have that social engagement, that routine to get them ready, so when they get to that school stage they’re settled.”

Community member Emma Cole works in aged care and is expecting a baby.

“I’m really worried for once I do have my baby and not being able to back to work, and not having support.”

Community member Toru Atiola has tried to keep one of her children in early education, however this involves travelling 190km both ways to get to the nearest centre.

“I know I would have loved to have studied part-time or even got a part-time job, but it just wasn’t an option for us here in Ti Tree. Having a childcare centre would be so beneficial to a lot of families here.”

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Note: SNAICC will be giving evidence to the Senate Select Committee on Work and Care at 1.15pm today AEST.

You can watch via the link https://www.aph.gov.au/watch_read_listen